

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated June 9, 2006. In view of the foregoing amendments and following representations, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

By the above amendment, claims 19-23 are cancelled; and claims 24-27 are added. Accordingly, the objections to the drawings and disclosure are now moot. Similarly, the rejection of claims 19, 22 and 23 is obviated by the cancellation of these claims. Next, on pages 4-6 of the Office Action, claims 14, 17 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Uematsu (JP 125767/1984) in view of Un (U.S. Patent No. 1322,375). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Uematsu discloses a nose mask having a spongy object 2 and having a filter layer 3 incorporated in an intermediate portion of the spongy object. The maximum outer diameter of the spongy object is clearly larger than the filter layer 3.

Clearly the Uematsu mask does not include a pair of filters arranged on opposite sides of a cellulose sponge as required in independent claims 14 and 24. The independent claims also require that the filters have a diameter that is larger than the maximum outer diameter of the cellulose sponge. Furthermore, Uematsu lacks any structure corresponding to the cap and stopper recited in the independent claims.

Un is applied to teach the claimed cap and stopper. However, the retaining means of Un is a pair of washers 6 provided on opposite sides of a sponge 5. However, the washers do not include a first engagement portion engaging an engagement member of the arrangement axle to secure the cap on the arrangement axle, and a second engagement portion engaging an engagement member of the stopper. The Un washers are not connected, in any manner, to each other.

Clearly, the collective teachings of the Uematsu and Un references do not meet each and every limitation of claims 14 or claim 24. There are clear distinctions between the independent claims and the prior art of record, and thus the pending claims are clearly patentable thereover.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the present application is now clearly in condition for allowance. The Examiner therefore is requested to pass this case to issue.

In the event that the Examiner has any comments or suggestions of a nature necessary to place this case in condition for allowance, then the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney by telephone to promptly resolve any remaining matters.

Respectfully submitted,

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